

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY ROME

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INFO AMCONSUL FLORENCE

AMCONSUL GENOA

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SUBJECT: COMMUNIST MEMBERSHIP CAMPAIGNS ENCOUNTER CONTINUING
RESISTANCE

1. SUMMARY: STATISTICS PUBLISHED IN L'UNITA DURING THE PAST WEEK (ISSUES OF AUGUST 4 AND 7) REVEAL THAT THE ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP CAMPAIGNS OF THE ITALIAN COMMUNIST PARTY (PCI) AND ITS YOUTH AFFILIATE (FGCI) HAVE NOT PRODUCED THE TYPE OF RESULTS DESIRED BY THE PARTY. THE NEWLY PUBLISHED INFORMATION CONFIRMS EARLIER REPORTS (EMBTel 6600 OF APRIL 22, 1977) INDICATING THAT THE PCI AND FGCI MEMBERSHIP CAMPAIGNS WERE ENCOUNTERING SOME RESISTANCE. FIGURES SHOW PCI MOMENTUM SLOWING. END SUMMARY.

2. ACCORDING TO L'UNITA OF AUGUST 7, MEMBERSHIP IN THE PCI AS OF AUGUST 4 HAD REACHED 1,806,561, AND INCREASE OF 3,811 MEMBERS OVER THE COMPARABLE DATE ONE YEAR EARLIER. TOTAL PCI MEMBERSHIP AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE 1976 CAMPAIGN WAS 1,814,263 (L'UNITA NOVEMBER 2, 1976).

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3. L'UNITA OF AUGUST 4 REVEALS THAT THE FGCI HAS SUCCEEDED IN ENROLLING APPROXIMATELY 122,000 MEMBERS WHICH REPRESENTS 85.4 PERCENT OF THE TOTAL OF 142,790 MEMBERS THE ORGANIZATION HAD AT THE CONCLUSION OF ITS CAMPAIGN IN 1976. RESPONDING TO QUESTIONS BY A L'UNITA REPORTER, ROBERTO GUERZONI, CHIEF OF THE

ORGANIZATIONAL SECTION OF THE FGCI, ATTRIBUTED THE MEMBERSHIP SHORTFALL TO BOTH ORGANIZATIONAL AND POLITICAL PROBLEMS. ON THE ORGANIZATIONAL SIDE, GUERZONI NOTED THAT THERE ARE FEWER FGCI SECTIONS IN THE COUNTRY THAN PCI SECTIONS WHICH PREVENTS THE GROUP FROM WORKING AS EFFECTIVELY AS POSSIBLE WITH THE NATION'S YOUTH. ON THE POLITICAL SIDE, GUERZONI POINTED TO QUOTE DEBATE OFTEN TOO CLOSED WITHIN THE ORGANIZATION END QUOTE WHICH MAKES IT HARD TO UNDERSTAND QUOTE THE DIFFICULTIES AND THE PROBLEMS OF THE GREAT MASSES OF THE YOUTH END QUOTE. ENDING THE INTERVIEW ON AN UPBEAT TONE, GUERZONI DENIED THAT THE FGCI IS AN ORGANIZATION IN CRISIS AND NOTED THAT THE FGCI'S FORTUNES WERE LOWEST IN JANUARY AND FEBRUARY OF THIS YEAR. HE STRESSED THE SUCCESS OF THE ORGANIZATION'S NEWLY FOUNDED WEEKLY NEWSPAPER LA CITTA FUTURA AND SIZEABLE YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN A NUMBER OF MANIFESTATIONS ORGANIZED BY THE FGCI AS SIGNS THAT THINGS ARE PICKING UP.

4. PARTY LEADERS ARE NOT HIDING THE PROBLEMS IN THE TWO MEMBERSHIP CAMPAIGNS. PARTY SECRETARIAT MEMBER CHIAROMONTE, IN A RECENT CONVERSATION WITH A FOREIGN JOURNALIST, EXPRESSED CLEAR DISAPPOINTMENT AT THE RESULTS ACHIEVED THUS FAR THIS YEAR. ON THE OTHER HAND PARTY SECRETARIAT MEMBER AND ORGANIZATIONAL CHIEF GIOVANNI CERVETTI IN A CONVERSATION AUGUST 9 WITH LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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AN ITALIAN JOURNALIST ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THE FIGURES ARE NOT AS GOOD AS LAST YEAR BUT TRIED TO EXPLAIN THEM AWAY, AT LEAST IN PART. HE ARGUED THAT THE DROP IN THE YOUTH MEMBERSHIP WAS THE RESULT OF INDIVIDUALS DECIDING TO BECOME MEMBERS OF THE PARTY ITSELF. CERVETTI ADDED THAT FOR POLITICAL REASONS THE PARTY IS CONTENT NOT TO SEE ITS MEMBERSHIP RANKS INCREASING AS RAPIDLY AS THEY DID IN 1975 AND 1976.

5. COMMENT. REGARDLESS OF WHAT CERVETTI SAYS, WE ARE CONVINCED THAT THE RESULTS OF THE CURRENT CAMPAIGNS ARE A CLEAR DISAPPOINTMENT FOR THE PARTY IN LIGHT OF THE MOMENTUM THAT IT WAS PERCEIVED TO HAVE HAD IN THE WAKE OF ITS 1975 AND 1976 ELECTORAL SUCCESSES. IN MANY WAYS THE FAILURE OF THE FGCI IS EVEN MORE STRIKING THAN THAT OF THE PCI SINCE YOUTH IS IMPORTANT TO THE FUTURE GROWTH, PARTICULARLY IN TERMS OF VOTING STRENGTH, OF THE PARTY. SINCE THE MEMBERSHIP CAMPAIGNS ARE FOR ALL INTENTS AND PURPOSES ALMOST OVER (LAST YEAR THE PCI ONLY RECRUITED APPROXIMATELY 11,500 MEMBERS BETWEEN AUGUST 4 AND THE END OF ITS CAMPAIGN IN EARLY NOVEMBER.), IT IS LIKELY THAT THE PCI WILL ONLY

REGISTER A MARGINAL GAIN OVER THE FINAL FIGURE ACHIEVED
LAST YEAR WHILE THE FGCI IS CERTAINLY GOING TO FALL
SHORT OF THE NUMBER IS HAD LAST YEAR. GIVEN THE FACT
THAT IN 1975 AND 1976 THE PCI GAINED 73,000 AND 84, 000
MEMBERS RESPECTIVELY IN COVPARISON WITH THE PREVIOUS
YEARS, THE PARTY'S CURRENT MEMBERSHIP CAMPAIGN IS ONE
HINT THAT THERE IS SOME SLOWDOWN IN THE PCI'S FORWARD
MENTUM.
HOLMES

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